

# **DNREC Division of Fish & Wildlife awarded federal grant to continue response to white-nose syndrome in state's bats**

Photo: A big brown bat hangs on a brick wall at Fort Delaware. Photo by Holly Niederriter.

**DOVER** – In recognition of International Bat Week, DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife announced that it has been awarded a federal grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to support Delaware's ongoing response to the deadly white-nose syndrome (WNS). The grant will help Delaware continue to monitor the state's bat populations and work with the public to limit the spread of WNS, which has taken a severe toll on North American bat species since it was discovered 11 years ago.

Characterized by a white fungus visible on a bat's nose, wings, tail, and ears, WNS is transmitted primarily by contact between bats. Since first discovered in New York State in the winter of 2006-2007, WNS has spread at an alarming rate and is now confirmed in 33 states and seven Canadian provinces, including Delaware. According to the USFWS, WNS has caused the death of 5.7 to 6.7 million bats in North America. Delaware's first WNS-related bat deaths were confirmed in 2012 among bats hibernating in cave-like conditions in Fort Delaware and Fort DuPont in New Castle County.

Only bat species that hibernate are known to be affected by WNS, including such species as the little brown, big brown, tri-colored, northern long-eared, and eastern small-footed bats – all found in Delaware. The northern long-eared and

little brown bats are among the most severely impacted by WNS. Because of dramatic population declines, the northern long-eared and little brown bats were added to Delaware's list of endangered species in 2014, and the northern long-eared bat was listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act in May 2015.

Bats are important to Delaware's ecology, feeding on millions of insects, including mosquitoes, beetles, moths, and agricultural pests, and in so doing, also helping ward off potential threats to public health and the food supply.

The 2018 grant marks the ninth year that the Division of Fish & Wildlife has received funding from the USFWS's Endangered Species and Science Applications programs to help fight WNS, with this year's funding totaling \$15,785. Delaware's grant was part of \$1 million in funding for natural resource agencies in 39 states and the District of Columbia.

For more information on bats in Delaware, please visit <http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/fw/bats> and on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/DelawareBatProgram/>.

To report a bat colony or unusual bat behavior, please call 302-735-3600.

Follow the Division of Fish & Wildlife on Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/DelawareFishWildlife>.

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**Vol. 48, No. 303**

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